

MIDWAY

Continued from A1

and elk.

Coleman believes the activity might keep the deer away from the meadow lined with stately black willows below Midway's Chalet.

Change is coming. Soldier Hollow is about to become a "venue" — as in Olympic venue.

And "venue" means water access, sewer hook-ups, exposure.

"And we all know what sewer and water means," says Midway resident Joe Morgan. "Sewer and water are the locomotive driving the growth train."

So "venue" also means more people, permanent and visiting; more businesses, which bring jobs and services but also traffic and congestion.

Projections from the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget show Midway's 2,422 residents in 1998 will double by 2020.

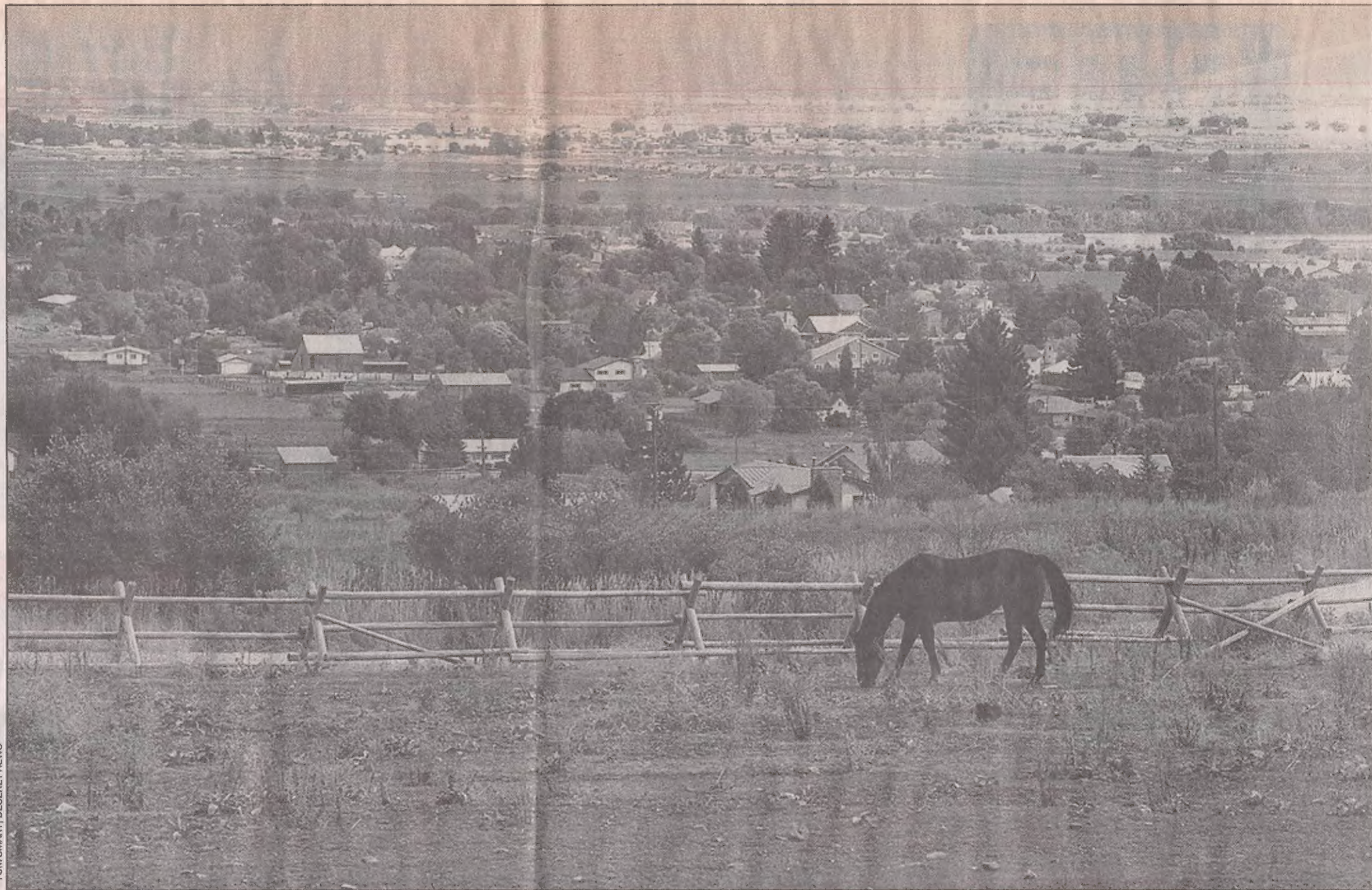
Some believe this onslaught will burden Midway's infrastructure, resources and patience. "The people who want change," says Coleman, "are the people who haven't lived here their whole lives."

There are others who can't wait for jobs, tax base and conveniences this growth will provide.

Regardless of their position, locals in this community settled by Mormon pioneers of Swiss heritage say "venue" means big changes on the horizon of the valley's sun-colored hills.

Don't be a victim

"I don't understand the problem," said Sarah Gordon, interrupted while scouting property to buy south of Midway.



TOM SMART, DESERET NEWS

A horse grazes in a pasture overlooking part of Midway, a traditional rural area that residents say is about to be hit by the growth train — the city is building an Olympic venue.



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"You can't beg for the Olympics and beg for people to come here but not want growth. You can't have good roads and school and want to pay nothing. You can't have convenience without letting a few people in."

Gordon wants to be part of what she calls the peace and tranquility in the Heber Valley. She's looked at Heber, the larger valley community a few miles away, and considered Charleston, but it was too small.

Her heart is set on Midway.

"Let's look at this positively. You have the Olympics. You have this beautiful place. Keep an eye on growth, sure, but let's not turn into the victim here like, 'All this is happening to me and there's nothing I can do to stop it.'"

16 days, 20,000 visitors

Soon, the natural bowl and mountainside where deer and elk graze will draw 20,000 spectators to this picturesque valley off U.S. 40. Soldier Hollow will be the most heavily used outdoor venue during the 2002 Winter Games, playing host to 20 biathlon, cross-country skiing and nordic combined events over 16 days of competition.

And after months of negotiations, a bevy of local, Olympic, parks and water officials have figured out a way to hook up toilets and faucets in the area.

The improvements are vital for the event — after all, those 20,000



Eugene Owens, in front of Town Hall, is mayor of Swiss-settled town.



Marriott plans to construct Zermatt Resort just east of Homestead Resort, which is west of Midway.

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spectators from all over the world will need a "loo" or "toire."

But local economic development folks say the Games-driven improvements may mean a better tax base for Heber Valley communities and better jobs for its residents.

"We want to build a legacy and infrastructure to improve the quality of life for our residents," said Robyn Pearson, economic development director for Heber Valley.

"For Pete's sake, we're not just doing this for two weeks in 2002."

In a deal signed last month, the Salt Lake Organizing Committee will spend \$1.4 million to bring water and sewer lines into the Soldier Hollow area of Wasatch Mountain State Park.

Under terms of the deal:

- SLOC will pay Midway Irrigation \$1 million to provide a pressurized irrigation line for water that will be used for snowmaking.

- Another \$300,000 is going to the Charleston Water Conservancy District for a new 500,000-gallon water tank that will replace a leaky one that holds only 50,000 gallons of drinking water.

- Wasatch County is getting \$100,000 toward the cost of bringing a sewer line to the site, which now has little development aside from a rustic building called the Chalet.

Winter sports experts marvel at the Soldier Hollow site; much of the course where athletes will ski and shoot will be visible to spectators — unusual for an event site.

Local officials want to make Soldier Hollow "the most spectacular cross-country and biathlon venue in Winter Olympics history," Wasatch County Commissioner Keith Jacobsen told a VIP group gathered there in September.

"Soldier Hollow is a magnificent site," SLOC President Frank Joklik raved earlier this month. "The natural beauty and topography make it an ideal location for an Olympic venue and a legacy facility after the Games."

But to Coleman, raised in nearby Heber, the Soldier Hollow venue is

not the beginning of positive economic impact or attribute, a "legacy" or any other in the bevy of benefits some say will come from locating a world-class facility in his back yard.

"I don't want to have all that up there."

A youth's perspective

Steve Carlisle is 17. He's finishing up his senior year at Wasatch High and is aware he's probably spending his last several months in the town he loves.

He's not planning to stay around after school. He'll attend Ricks College in Idaho next year, then he'll probably have to go away.

"The prospect of coming back is pretty slim. . . . It's just so expensive," said Carlisle. "Ten years ago this was a farm town."

"Some people have jobs here but not good ones," said Carlisle, who is student body president. His dad commutes to Salt Lake. And even with a great job, there's no way a young person can afford to live in Heber or Midway now, he says.

Coleman can't dream of having his parents' setup. His dad works for Heber Light and Power; his mom teaches elementary school locally.

He's lived here all his life.

"I don't hardly know any of my neighbors anymore. . . . and Main Street is so packed."

The businesses love it, but the young people born and raised here do not.

Amber Hoelzer, 17, is student body secretary and lives in nearby Charleston. She's resigned to moving away, too, and worries her town will end up like the popular tourist destination to the west.

"It's just so crowded in Park City — there isn't enough room for all the people. I don't want that to happen to Heber."

Every home a chalet

The scenery here can be a bit puzzling to visitors.

There is Gridlehaus Square, the Edelweiss Gallery, even the

Burgermeister Haus.

There is a Snelgrove's Ice Cream store tucked in a Swedish-style strip mall, but Midway is mostly a community that has carried along the history and heritage of the Swiss Mormon pioneers who settled this area. Even the post office has green shutters and the look of a chalet.

The community is rich with a quaint charm unique to this part of the state.

What Midway doesn't have, say Pearson, is jobs.

One-third of residents work in the mostly low-wage service industry. About half the people commute to work somewhere else.

"It's kind of a Catch-22," Pearson said. "You can't have homes and homes alone. You have to have quality jobs and some kind of a tax base."

So Pearson and his colleagues welcome the Olympics, they welcome the water and sewer improvement, and they hope what's under way will prompt greater improvements.

"If we could bring Charleston into the loop it would reduce everyone's cost and make the whole thing more financially viable," Pearson said.

He is talking about the 550 residents in Charleston who have septic tanks, many of whom could opt to hook up to the sewer line if the town agrees to connect to the expanded system and share some equipment.

"In the real world, a little town like Midway can't survive without some kind of tax base."

Rich man's paradise

New teachers at Wasatch High School can't afford to live within 30 miles of the Heber campus. Most commute from Provo.

Modest starter bungalows sell for \$185,000, or a person can rent a small home for \$1,350 — and new teachers don't make enough to pay that.

Jaelyn Wallace, a counselor at Wasatch High, bought her house 12 years ago and has watched her property's value skyrocket.



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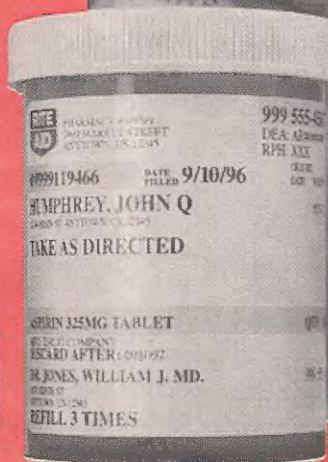
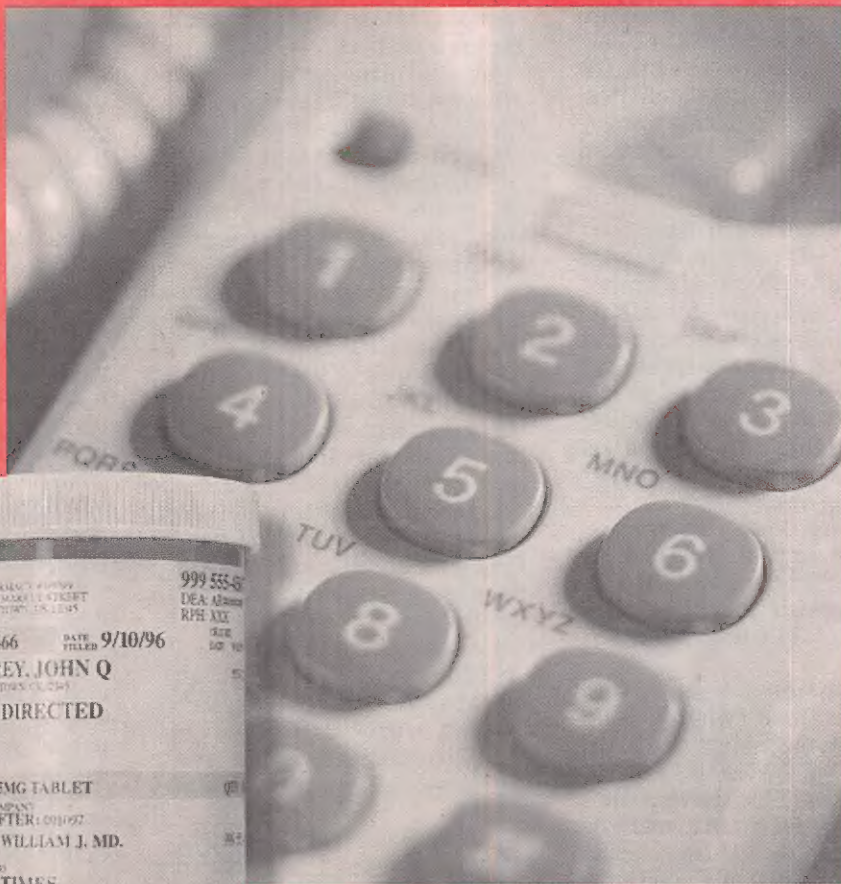
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"As a homeowner it's nice, but I can't imagine my two kids will live here unless they're living at home."

The parents, townspeople and professionals she talks to about growth are split on the subject.

"There are those who are really excited about it and those who think it's going to ruin everything."

Wallace herself is a little leery of the ripple-effect theory of affordability. "If a Wal-Mart comes in, I don't know how many people are going to be able to live here on that salary."

Midway Mayor Eugene Owens is watchful of the situation.

Fewer building permits were issued last year than the previous year, and developers must pay high fees to build in the Heber Valley. "But high costs don't matter to a lot of these people. It's hard to control; the water is really the best way to do it."

Owens also has the unenviable task of balancing town sentiment with economic realities.

"The locals would like to keep it as it is — a nice little town — but that's already gone by the wayside."

In nice little towns, for example, quarter-acre lots don't sell for as much as \$90,000.

"It's scary, Owens said. "It's getting to be a rich man's paradise."

Where you're from

You don't have to be from Chicago or Atlanta or Somewhere Else to be an outsider here. You just have to be from farther away than Wasatch County; Orem is far enough away for outsider status.

Britt Mathwich knows.

There's always a concern when someone new comes in — and there's extra concern when that person tries to buy or build something local folks think might change the flavor of their community.

About 13 years ago Mathwich and several investors bought the Homestead Resort west of town. Mathwich, now general manager of the property, and the others worked closely with local planners

as they expanded the resort from 97 to 130 rooms and built an 18-hole golf course.

It takes that kind of cooperation and understanding, Mathwich said. "You have to look at the local community and respect them."

The nearby Deer Crest project, which is developing high-end housing in the north side of Wasatch County across from the Jordanelle Reservoir, has done a great job, Mathwich said.

And with proper supervision, development can be a thumbs up for the area, he said.

Improvements to the area around Soldier Hollow will increase profits and business for the Homestead significantly, he said. The hiking, equestrian trails and improved buildings at the Chalet will be a boost to the Homestead's primary summer season. And events held at the venue after 2002 could open the door to a hearty winter season of business, too.

The site has to be ready for a national championship competition scheduled for January 2000.

Three World Cup events — in nordic combined, cross-country and biathlon — are set between December 2000 and February 2001.

After the Olympics, state park officials hope Soldier Hollow stays busy.

Plans are being developed for an 18- to 36-hole golf course nearby as well as new picnic, group camping and other recreation areas. A portion of the competition courses may be paved for roller-skiing in warm weather.

Parks director Courtland Nelson said the courses will continue to be used by elite athletes for training and competition after the Games.

And Mathwich is one resident in this quaint town who has made up his mind what effect 3.5 billion people — about half the world's population — can have on the community that viewers see framed in their televisions during the upcoming Winter Olympics.

"It certainly sets a positive stage for development."

Like Chicago, like Midway

Joe Morgan's daughter was about to have a baby, and so he came to the Utah mountains from a Chicago suburb to visit. The baby was late coming, which gave Morgan and his wife a lot of time to look around Midway. He liked the small-town feel. Eight years ago, he moved to Utah's Wasatch County.

But Morgan has noticed some familiar trends.

Before moving, he and his Chicago-area neighbors spent 18 years battling with a developer about how to best use 20 acres near LaGrange, a Chicago suburb.

Developers wanted to put in condos, a nursing home and a shopping center.

"It would have changed the whole character of the area, the traffic, everything."

It happens over and over throughout the country, Morgan said. "People want to make the most money off their property, and many times they aren't the least bit civic-minded about it."

Blanket "property-rights" protections should not trump a town's ability to create its own character.

"The townspeople have been here a long time, and they have property rights, too."

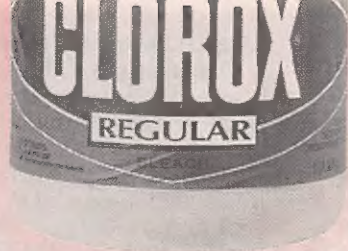
There is the Hamlet development on Midway's east side with its townhomes and condos. It was billed as low-income, according to Morgan, but by the time the deal is approved, a two-bedroom property is more than \$100,000.

"A small town like this can change drastically in no time," he said.

Townspeople have tried to exert some control. After one proposed development, which would have single-handedly doubled the community's population, they tried to exert more.

A 1995 initiative would have limited growth to 3 percent to 4 percent.

"It was defeated," Morgan said. "A lot of people voted for it, more than they thought would. I think it sent a message."



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